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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 09 BRUSSELS 001879

SIPDIS

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AFFAIRS
ONDPC FOR DIRECTOR, OSR, ODR

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SUBJECT: DISCUSSIONS AT NOVEMBER 14 U.S.-EU TROIKA MEETING
ON DRUG ISSUES DEMONSTRATE OVERALL TRANSATLANTIC
CONVERGENCE ON DRUG ISSUES

Classified By: INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS AND LAW ENFORCEMENT
AFFAIRS (INL) COUNSELOR JAMES P. MCANULTY FOR REASONS
1.4 (B) AND (D)

SUMMARY

¶ 1. (C) Discussions at the November 14 U.S.-European Union (EU) Troika meeting on Drug Issues confirmed U.S.-EU convergence on most drug issues. Assistant Secretary of State for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement (INL) Affairs David Johnson led the inter-agency U.S. Delegation as a sign of the importance that the U.S. attaches to continued close cooperation and dialogue with EU officials on drug developments and initiatives around the globe. Both sides briefed on current drug consumption patterns in the U.S. and Europe, with the U.S. noting progress in reducing drug consumption among youth while the EU expressed concern over stubbornly high numbers of drug associated deaths. Support of the Central Asia Regional Information Coordination Center remained a high priority for both the U.S. and the EU, with both sides expressing hope for prompt entry into operations of this center. Both delegations reported on some progress in Afghanistan counter-drug and rule of law efforts, while stressing the importance of support for capacity building efforts in this critical drug-source and production country. U.S. and EU officials agreed that they needed to take urgent and sustained actions to bolster the ability of West African nations to stem the flow of drugs from Latin America through their region to Europe. The impending expulsion of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) from Bolivia presented an immediate challenge that neither side viewed as reversible. (SEPTEL reports on the Assistant Secretary's discussions on Bolivia with Commission Deputy Director-General for Relations with Asia and Latin America Joao Aguiar Machado.) The U.S. provided an update on the Merida Initiative which will provide major counter-drug and security assistance funding to Mexico and Central America in the near future. The main point of divergence at the Troika discussions involved the EU's planned inclusion and highlighting of the controversial "harm reduction" concept in the Political Declaration and Annex Documents to be tabled at an upcoming High-Level meeting of the 52nd session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) in Vienna which will review progress made since the UN General Assembly Special

Session (UNGASS) on drugs in 1998. Officials from both sides agreed to follow-up discussions on this issue to attempt to arrive at satisfactory wording. END SUMMARY.

U.S. AND EU DELEGATIONS

12. (U) U.S. and EU officials met November 14 in Brussels at their semi-annual Troika meeting on drug issues. INL Assistant Secretary (A/S) David Johnson led the U.S. Delegation, which included Mission INL Counselor James P. McAnulty, Mission DEA Assistant Regional Director (ARD) Thomas A. Scarantino, INL Policy, Planning, and Coordination (INL/PC) Deputy Director John Bargeron, INL Asia, Africa, and Europe Programs (INL/AAE) Senior Advisor Elizabeth F. Carroll, White House Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) Policy Officer Christine Kourtides, INL/PC Foreign Affairs Officer Cassandra B. Stuart, and INL/AAE Foreign Affairs Officer Joseph N. McBride. Judge Etienne Apaire, President of the French Inter-Ministerial Mission for the Fight Against Drugs and Drug Addiction (MILDT), and Laura d'Arrigo, an official from the Department of Strategic Affairs, Security, and Disarmament in the French Ministry of External and European Relations, co-chaired the EU Delegation as representatives of the French Presidency of the Council of the EU. The EU Delegation also included European Commission (EC) Drugs Coordination Head of Unit Carel Edwards, Secretariat General of the Council (SGC) Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) Head of Unit Johannes Vos, Commission Head of Unit Andrew Standley, Commission Afghanistan Desk Officer

BRUSSELS 00001879 002 OF 009

Paul Turner, Commission Drugs Deputy Coordinator Ann Vanhout, Commission Bolivia Desk Officer Nicola Murray, officials from the European Police Office (EUROPOL) and the European Monitoring Center for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA), and representatives from 17 or more EU Member States, including Austria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Luxembourg, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, and the United Kingdom. The Czech Republic will assume the Presidency of the Council of the EU on January 1, 2009.

PREVIEW OF BUDGET AND DRUG STRATEGY

13. (U) ONDCP Officer Kourtides provided an overview of drug consumption trends in the U.S. as well as a preview of the 2009 U.S. National Drug Control Strategy. She noted significant, measurable progress since 2001 in reducing drug consumption among youth in the United States, including declines of 24 percent in overall drug use, 25 percent in marijuana use, 54 percent in MDMA (ecstasy) use, 60 percent in LSD use, 33 percent in steroid use, and 64 percent in methamphetamine use. U.S. work place testing also demonstrated a major decline in cocaine use, which dropped 19 percent. Between 2006 and 2007, cocaine prices also increased by 21 percent and purity dropped by 9 percent overall. Authorities in both Colombia and Mexico played key roles in reducing the amount of cocaine reaching U.S. territory. The main exception to these positive trends involved increased non-medical use of prescription medications. An estimated 7,000 persons became new, non-authorized users of such drugs in the United States, with many of these abusers gaining access to such substances from friends or relatives.

14. (U) The President has requested 14.1 billion dollars for the next U.S. counter-drug budget in support of the U.S. National Drug Control Strategy, with amounts allocated in a balanced way among prevention, treatment, and interdiction efforts. The incoming President will submit his first fully-new counter-drug budget in early 2010. Nevertheless, continuity will probably continue among the three major U.S.

anti-drug "pillars" -- namely, (1) stopping initiation of drug use, (2) reducing drug abuse and addiction, and (3) disrupting the supply of drugs to the U.S. market. A/S Johnson noted that the initial 2009 drug budget submitted in January, as required by law, involved estimates that the new President could later revise in March. The Assistant Secretary noted that the 1.8 billion dollars identified for international initiatives actually understated overall U.S. expenditures, as this figure did not include all U.S. Department of Defense allocations for counter-drug support. A/S Johnson singled out abuse of prescription medications as a concern that all developed countries, not just the United States, should address forcefully.

EU DRUG CONSUMPTION

¶5. (U) Commission Head of Unit Edwards noted that the current, four-year EU Drugs Action Plan would end this year. The Commission planned to conduct an in-depth analysis of the results. Nonetheless, Edwards expressed concern that the Commission would encounter difficulty measuring success of drug policies, particularly in drawing causal links between public policy and public health results. In general, he noted that the latest statistics had shown neither a major decline nor a significant increase in overall drug use within the European Union. That said, some statistics showed continuing areas of concern, particularly as some Member States witnessed an increase in use of cocaine. Nonetheless, he remarked that the 27 sovereign states making up the EU had developed a clear convergence of anti-drug policies -- favoring a "balanced" approach that focused not only on

BRUSSELS 00001879 003 OF 009

supply reduction but on "reducing harm to society and individuals" caused by drug use. Edwards explained that the EU counter-drug budget for 2006 to 2011 amounted to over 600 million euros. He suggested the need to increase the effectiveness of EU public awareness programs, as the current programs did not appear to capture the public's attention. In many Member States, Edwards explained, a "civil disobedience" gap appeared to exist between what is required by law and what is demonstrated by behavior in the abuse of drugs.

¶6. (U) The EMCDDA Representative briefed on drug consumption trends within the EU and associated countries. Per the just-released annual EMCDDA report, use of opioids remained a serious concern in the EU, with many opioids coming from Afghanistan through the Balkan countries and Turkey to the EU. The report, which covers the 27 EU Member States plus three additional countries, noted 1.3 to 1.7 million users of opioids. Drug-related deaths remained a major concern. Between 2003 and 2004, such deaths had risen again within the EU after witnessing temporary declines after 2000. Overdose deaths often involved a "cocktail" of drugs, making it difficult to link certain fatalities to specific drugs, particularly cocaine. He said 600,000 opioid users were undergoing drug treatment, with the average age of this population steadily rising. Cannabis remained the most abused drug within the EU, followed by stimulants. Abuse of amphetamines and ecstasy had stabilized or even declined, while use of cocaine was increasing, with an average of 2.3 percent of the overall population using cocaine. Drug abuse levels varied among Member States, with the highest incidence occurring in the United Kingdom (5.4 percent of the population). Drug-related deaths in the EU had reached 500 in the last year. Seizures of cocaine have increased significantly, particularly within the Iberian Peninsula, with much of the cocaine flow transiting Africa from Latin America. The EMCDDA Representative also expressed concern over use of the Internet to purchase drugs, with authorities identifying over 100 controlled substances for sale via the Internet. In summary, he reiterated concern over stubbornly

high rates of drug-related deaths and over increased use of opioids and stimulants among EU users.

DRUG TRAFFICKING TRENDS

17. (U) EUROPOL Head of Unit Robert Hauschild briefed participants on drug trafficking trends and on analytical efforts by his organization. EUROPOL identified Southwest Asia as the main source of heroin within the EU, South America as the main source of cocaine, and the EU itself as the main source of synthetic drugs. EUROPOL officials have opened Analytical Work Files (AWFs) devoted to analysis of these drug trends, including a study on heroin trafficking organizations and organized crime groups in Turkey, an analysis of criminal organizations in Latin America, and a description of criminal organizations smuggling synthetic drugs. He noted that analysts can learn and extrapolate from recent drug trends in the United States, as cocaine sales have declined in the U.S. while rising in Europe. In cooperation with U.S. authorities, EU officials in various Member States have helped to curb production of synthetic drugs, particularly in the Netherlands, Belgium, and Germany, which exported large quantities of synthetics during the nineties. Recently, EUROPOL analysts have provided "operational and technical support" for the dismantling of drug laboratories, including most recently in Iceland (a non-EU country that cooperates closely with the EU). They have also identified manufacturers and distributors of specialized equipment used in the production of synthetics, but increased use of sophisticated "mobile unit" laboratories has hindered detection and enforcement efforts.

18. (U) A/S Johnson noted that U.S. authorities had increased the reliability of drug-use statistics by developing more accurate indicators through greater involvement of U.S.

BRUSSELS 00001879 004 OF 009

citizens. Such indicators have shown that effective use of taxpayer funds in counter-drug efforts can produce changes in behavior among citizens. That said, authorities had missed initial trends involving methamphetamine use. Now, authorities have "gotten ahead of the curve" in addressing this problem, with local U.S. initiatives, efforts by local police, and the help of Mexican authorities in changing the formulae for cold medicines in Mexico away from amphetamines.

AFGHANISTAN

19. (C) The A/S described the drug situation in Afghanistan as "very difficult." Drug trafficking fuels corruption and threatens the effectiveness of international assistance programs. Drugs represent the largest uncontrolled source of funds in Afghanistan and could erode all our efforts there. Poppy production and drug trafficking had become "inextricably linked" to levels of insecurity. On the positive side, the number of provinces free of poppy cultivation increased to 18 provinces, out of 34. Another nine provinces had less than 600 hectares of cultivation. Even the province of Nangahar went from being the second largest producer province to being virtually free of poppy cultivation. International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and U.S. support for local governors and authorities made a key difference. Now, poppy cultivation is concentrated in the non-secure southern provinces. If Helmand were considered an independent state, it would be the largest producer of opium in the world.

110. (C) A public awareness program in Afghanistan began in the fall for this planting season, and ground-based eradication operations should begin after January 1. The eradication program can work, and the key will be the ability

of the Afghan National Army to provide force protection to the eradication units. Such force protection units are completing their training in Kabul and will re-deploy to provinces soon. The A/S urged greater support for the Good Performers Initiative (GPI), in which the U.S. and United Kingdom have invested some 30 million dollars. He cited the GPI as one of the most valuable programs, which links funding for development projects to good behavior. Such positive conditionality, for example, has resulted in faster turn-around of funding to establish hospitals and orchards in the improved regions. He urged EU Member States and the Commission to contribute additional funds to the GPI.

¶11. (C) D'Arrigo of the French Presidency of the Council agreed with the U.S. analysis of the drug threat. While the drought may have contributed to lesser poppy cultivation in the north and northeast, lack of security is clearly linked to drug trafficking. She also raised cannabis production as a threat. Farmers in poppy-free provinces may be tempted to cultivate cannabis. The international community must also focus on supporting the Afghan Government through follow-up to pledges at the June 12 Donors Conference in Paris as well as support for the judicial system, which is hampered by corruption and in need of reconstruction.

¶12. (C) Commission Afghan Desk Officer Turner noted EU support for alternative livelihoods in Nangahar. The Commission has tried to attack the sequence of drug production and trafficking at various levels and has sought to strengthen border controls. An estimated 20 percent of heroin production goes to Central Asia. A major factor will be the sustainability of programs promoting good governance. Turner commended cooperation with Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) and the U.S. Agency for International Development (AID). Increases in food prices in certain areas have made cultivating wheat almost as profitable as growing opium poppy. He welcomed the appointment of a new Minister of Interior. Turner remarked that the Commission had contributed 15 million euros to the Counter-Narcotics Trust Fund (CNTF) and that this money could be used in the GPI. He

BRUSSELS 00001879 005 OF 009

reported that staffing for the European Police Mission in Afghanistan (EUPOL) would double to 400. The EU has appointed a new EUPOL Head of Mission, he said, and trends seemed to be moving in the right direction.

¶13. (C) In response to a question from Turner, A/S Johnson said prospects for Afghan prosecution of top-level drug offenders may be low during the next calendar year. Prosecutors will eventually use domestic legislation to prosecute more senior traffickers. In the meantime, some high-level traffickers have undergone prosecution in the United States, with the latest offender receiving a prison sentence of 12 years. Given the serious impact of Afghan opium production on European markets, A/S Johnson encouraged EU Member States to initiate selected prosecutions of high-level traffickers. After all, he reminded interlocutors, the EU was now losing more citizens from heroin overdoses than from fighting on the battlefield, according to the latest statistics.

¶14. (C) A/S Johnson encouraged all international partners to help build crime-fighting capacities in Afghanistan. He agreed that appointment of the new Minister of Interior appeared to be a positive development. Yet capabilities needed to be built from the bottom up, with prosecutors developing solid cases for prosecution. Describing the CNTF as "dysfunctional" and hindered by slow feedback and decision-making processes, A/S Johnson encouraged the Commission and Member States to consider direct contributions to the GPI. The international community needed to make the time between funding decisions and disbursements as short as possible. There was no real correlation between poverty and poppy cultivation, as infrastructure was in place to allow

farmers to switch to licit crops. A/S Johnson expressed gratitude for EUPOL involvement. He observed that civilian police trainers desperately needed a "cocoon" of military protection for their activities, expressing hope that additional military forces would be able to provide such protection after consulting with national governments. He acknowledged that the U.S. military was stretched thin as well. The reality is that military forces cannot provide sufficient force protection for all trainers that could be deployed in the country. Yet, focused district development re-training and follow-up mentoring after deployment would be critical factors in building rule of law capabilities in Afghanistan.

¶15. (C) On eradication, A/S Johnson clarified that the goal was not the eradication of opium crops but rather the prevention of planting such crops in the first place and their being processed into drugs thereafter. In the past year, the Afghan poppy eradication force did not receive the level of force protection promised by the Afghan National Army. As a result, only a small number of poppy fields actually underwent eradication. With help from the UK and other partners, Afghan units will target specific, high-value fields owned by major traffickers, under the assumption that, if eradication reached at least 20 percent of the fields, farmers will be persuaded to switch to licit crops during the next planting season.

CENTRAL ASIA REGIONAL INFORMATION COORDINATION CENTER

16, (U) D'Arrigo noted that the French government had confirmed its commitment to Central Asia during the EU-Central Asia Forum convened in Paris September 18 at the Foreign Ministers' level. Similarly, France participated in the Dushanbe Conference on Border Management. EU officials hoped to see the Central Asia Regional Information Coordination Center (CARICC) operational soon. A/S Johnson noted that the U.S. had contributed to CARICC through the OSCE and UNODC. He expressed hope that Russia would complete its ratification process for the CARICC agreement.

BRUSSELS 00001879 006 OF 009

DRUG TRENDS IN WEST AFRICA

¶17. (C) D'Arrigo remarked that West Africa had become an "important crossroads" for cocaine entering the EU from Latin America. Poverty, weak institutions, and corruption all contributed to a bleak situation. France and several EU Member States recently participated in a conference in Praia, Cape Verde, at which participants discussed implementation of regional assistance projects. Commission Head of Unit Standley singled out West Africa as the region on the continent most affected by drug trafficking. Officials planned to use 520 million euros from various funding mechanisms, including the Stability Instrument and the Regional Development Program (EDA) to help with capacity-building in Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, and Ghana. Officials from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) had briefed participants on its Plan of Action at the Praia conference.

¶18. (C) Expressing considerable concern about the drug situation in West Africa, the Assistant Secretary observed that police institutions in West Africa were incapable of facing the oncoming flow of drugs from Latin America. Poor behavior by the Venezuelan Government has vastly accelerated the flow of cocaine to the region. Detection and monitoring have revealed increased numbers of light aircraft flying across the Atlantic with loads of cocaine. Even Mexican traffickers have become increasingly involved. A/S Johnson urged EU colleagues to increase their efforts in the region,

as the vast majority of cocaine reaching West Africa flowed onward to Europe. Criminal organizations not only smuggled drugs but also illegal migrants. He suggested naming of Points of Contact on technical assistance to the region to ensure that the most urgent priorities are met. Foreign Affairs Officer McBride, who had just returned from the conference in Praia, reported that U.S. officials had recently completed in-depth assessments on Senegal and Ghana and would be willing to share these assessments with EU counterparts. A/S Johnson commended a regional approach, recognizing that traffickers often changed their routes and tactics in response to counter-drug successes in individual countries.

DETERIORATING SITUATION IN BOLIVIA

¶19. (C) A/S Johnson commended a recent General Accounting Office (GAO) report on the impact of counter-drug assistance to Colombia as worthy of review. While the GAO analysis noted that U.S. counter-drug assistance had not achieved the initially sought-after fifty-percent reduction in coca cultivation in Colombia, such assistance had significantly suppressed drug trafficking and had helped Colombians to transform their country into a vastly better place. He described a much different scenario unfolding in neighboring Bolivia, where the coca growers union had forced the departure of AID personnel from the coca growing Chapare region. Shortly thereafter, the Bolivian Government expelled the U.S. Ambassador. Then, earlier this month, Bolivian President Evo Morales ordered the expulsion of DEA personnel from the country. The Assistant Secretary warned that the international community faced an "extraordinary" situation in Bolivia. At one time, the U.S. counter-drug assistance program in Bolivia had been the largest in the world, focusing almost exclusively on coca eradication and alternative development. Now, Bolivian coca production has surged, particularly through increases in "licit" production of coca leaf. While the INL Bureau did not currently plan to curtail its counter-drug assistance program there, future decisions by the GOB were difficult to predict and INL would remain vigilant. Virtually all cocaine produced in Bolivia either went to domestic consumption or to users in Brazil, Argentina, and Europe. A/S Johnson warned that a "growing proportion of a growing amount" of cocaine produced in

BRUSSELS 00001879 007 OF 009

Bolivia would head to Europe. Overall, the picture was not a pretty one, and such cocaine flows through Brazil and Argentina would exert even greater pressure on unprepared governments in West Africa.

¶20. (C) Mission DEA ARD Scarantino provided additional details on the status of DEA in Bolivia. He noted that, barring an unexpected reversal of the expulsion order, DEA personnel planned to depart within the next two months. Currently, DEA agents no longer had any relationship with GOB counterparts. Sharing of intelligence on drug trafficking organizations was curtailed within the past two months. Neighboring countries appeared to be concerned by the impending expulsion.

¶21. (C) A/S Johnson urged EU Member States with greater influence in Bolivia to press for a reversal of the expulsion order. President Morales' political origin as a coca grower and his political base among the coca growers' union set him on his current course, making any reasoning with him difficult at best. A/S Johnson urged as well that the Commission seek completion as soon as possible of the Commission-supported study on uses of coca leaf. He also warned against allowing the GOB to co-opt the study to support expansion of uses of coca leaf to other commercial purposes. Head of Unit Standley, who noted that he had served as Delegation Head of Mission in Bolivia until one year ago, remarked that the Commission had attempted to build

a constructive relationship with GOB counterparts. He expressed "extreme concern" over current developments in Bolivia, acknowledging that much of Bolivia's cocaine ended up in Europe. He recalled that agreement to the study occurred after he received strong support from the U.S. Embassy at the time. The intent of the study has always been to develop a sound empirical basis for quantifying legitimate, traditional uses of coca leaf in Bolivia. He had always been convinced that the results of the study would "call the government's bluff" regarding the amount of coca leaf required for traditional uses, including for chewing, ingredients in teas, and use in religious ceremonies.

¶22. (C) Murray, the Commission's Bolivia Desk Officer, said she shared U.S. concerns over the "very worrying," latest developments in Bolivia. She remarked that U.S. counterparts have had to put up with considerable abuse. Although she indicated that the EU enjoyed "better" relations, its relationship with Bolivia had increasingly become "quite difficult." Commission colleagues were studying how to approach the GOB regarding the expulsion decision. Even the coca study has been slow in getting started, in spite of the EU's continual prodding of GOB officials. Accordingly, she predicted, the study would not likely be completed before the end of 2009. Regarding Commission assistance to GOB economic development projects, Standley repeated earlier assurances that the financing agreement contained a provision specifically "excluding" Commission support for "industrialization of coca leaf."

¶23. (C) Asked about prospects for a "change of heart" by President Morales, A/S Johnson responded that the U.S. was not happy about the impending expulsion of DEA personnel and that the U.S. had reached the "limits of its patience," not wanting to "reward" GOB officials for "solving a crisis that they themselves had created." Any solution would need to be on the basis of "comity" and not on the basis of insults and the willingness to ignore such insults. He lamented that one of the most significant losses would be investment in human capital in Bolivia. Without DEA presence, the integrity of "vetted units" would erode quickly. If Bolivia were to expel Narcotics Affairs Section (NAS) personnel as well, then funding would be switched to other countries and programs. He warned that, if such a development were to occur, restarting a NAS program in Bolivia would require years to accomplish.

CUBA AS A POTENTIAL TRANSIT COUNTRY

BRUSSELS 00001879 008 OF 009

¶24. (C) The EUROPOL representative signaled concern over the impending lack of U.S. personnel to gain insights into drug trafficking inside Bolivia. He inquired about cooperation with Cuba, which he characterized as a "entry gate" for drugs reaching Europe. A/S Johnson said Cuba had the potential, vice current reality, to become a "huge aircraft carrier" for the transit of cocaine to Europe, especially if the relationship between Cuban and Venezuelan leaders were to play a part in such a development. For now, the U.S had no significant aviation relationship with Cuba -- only a few charter flights.

THE MERIDA INITIATIVE

¶25. (C) A/S Johnson reported that the Administration had secured funding from Congress for 477 million dollars to be expended during the first year of a multi-year security and counter-drug assistance program to Mexico and Central America. Of that amount, 440 million dollars would go to projects in Mexico. He praised the administration of

President Felipe Calderon for taking "extraordinarily difficult steps" against drug trafficking organizations in Mexico. Notably, Mexican authorities invested four dollars for every dollar that the U.S. invested in Mexico for fighting drugs and crime. Officials from both governments were finalizing details for disbursement of funds that would help procure border inspection equipment and aviation assets, including helicopters. Such assistance will have a direct impact on the health and safety of U.S. citizens, given the potential risk of spill-over of drug-related violence across the border.

ISSUE OF "HARM REDUCTION" AT UNGASS DELIBERATIONS

¶26. (C) The Assistant Secretary expressed hope that U.S. and EU officials could work together to promote drug policies based on solid evidence and a balanced approach between demand and supply reduction. The U.S. would like to formalize conclusions of UN General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) Working Groups in Vienna based on the many drug positions that the U.S. and EU hold in common. Axel Kuechle of Germany immediately raised "harm reduction," acknowledging active and controversial discussions between EU and U.S. delegations on this subject. He insisted that UNGASS include "harm reduction" as an "essential element" of demand reduction. He quoted UN Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Executive Director Antonio Maria Costa as asserting in a recently published paper that demand reduction and harm reduction policies "complemented" each other. He lamented the existence of multiple proposals -- including one from the Mexican delegation and two counterproposals from Germany and Egypt.

¶27. (C) A/S Johnson replied that the U.S. welcomed discussions with the EU in any context. He suggested that delegations attempt to improve an existing document rather than working from texts of new documents to arrive at a satisfactory document, preferably before the High Level meeting in March. Noting that the phrase "harm reduction" meant many things to many people, including many negative connotations, the Assistant Secretary suggested encapsulating positive aspects of this concept into the document without using this "unhelpful formulation." Otherwise, continued pursuit of this catch-phrase would cause delegations to "run into a brick wall." Noting that the U.S. and the EU "saw eye to eye" on so many drug policies and objectives, he expressed hope that our delegations would try to "get to the right place" in our UNGASS discussions.

¶28. (C) D'Arrigo said the French Presidency of the Council
BRUSSELS 00001879 009 OF 009

shared this view, acknowledging that the U.S. and the EU "can be very effective, when we work together." She remarked that both sides demonstrated much solidarity and considerably "more convergence than divergence" on drug issues. Pavel Vacek of the incoming Czech Presidency of the Council, remarking that he had previously served as a chairperson at a Commission on Narcotics Drugs session, indicated support for the German views on "harm reduction" and underscored his belief that such practices were not intended to facilitate drug abuse. He said he too hoped that both sides could reach a compromise on this issue.

NEXT TROIKA MEETING ON DRUG ISSUES

¶29. (U) Vacek of the Czech Republic proposed that the next U.S.-EU Troika meeting on Drug Issues occur in Brussels on or around June 26 under the next Presidency of the Council.

COMMENT

¶30. (C) Discussions at the semi-annual Troika meeting continued to show much more transatlantic agreement than disagreement on drug issues, particularly on drug trends and priorities for addressing drug threats around the globe. The prime area of difference involved the EU's proposed inclusion and highlighting of the "harm reduction" concept in the Political Declaration and Annex that will be tabled at the upcoming High-Level Session of the UN CND in Vienna as part of the ten-year review of the Plan of Action on Drugs approved by the UNGASS in 1998. For the first time in many years, an Assistant Secretary of State had chaired the U.S. Delegation to this meeting. Head of Unit Vos, a well-respected, 31-year veteran of the Council Secretariat, later remarked to INL Counselor that this Troika meeting had been the best he had witnessed in many years. He singled out the Assistant Secretary for the quality of his interventions and his willingness to engage in constructive and productive discussions on issues of importance to both the U.S. and the EU. END COMMENT.

¶31. (U) The INL Bureau has cleared on this telegram.

MURRAY

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